

DESIGNING BEADWORK: PART 1

The language of design

by **Diane Fitzgerald**

Devote 2009 to honing your design skills with my six-part series. In part 1, we'll explore what it means to design beadwork, learn the language of design, and discover how this knowledge can help you analyze and evaluate beadwork.

Perhaps you've started a beadwork project, but you feel that it just isn't going well and you're not sure what changes to make to get the project back on track. Or perhaps you're considering the work of another beader and wondering why it is (or isn't) appealing. This is where an understanding of design and the language of design come into play.

Understanding design and the language we use to talk about it allows us to analyze the elements of a piece to determine how they interact and contribute to the whole. This knowledge helps us analyze the strengths and weaknesses of beadwork.

What does it mean to design?

Designing is the process of arranging components — such as beads, threads, and findings — in a meaningful way, both aesthetically and functionally.

For many of us, the design process may go something like this: You've purchased a focal bead and are planning to create a necklace with it. Next, you might think about how the finished necklace will be worn, what beads you have available to complete the project, or how much money you can spend to buy the needed components.

In other words, designing begins with an idea and a decision to create something. The next step is the state-

ment of a goal and an assessment of what you have to work with or the parameters that you will have to work within.

A third step differentiates design from personal preference, or taste. Design differs from taste in that it offers criteria to judge how well the beadwork accomplishes its goal aesthetically and functionally. Good design can be appreciated for its ability to achieve a certain effect, even if the viewer does not personally care for it.

How do we talk about design?

The language of design includes the elements and principles of design. Using the elements and principles of design, we can discuss with others or evaluate in our own minds what we see visually, allowing us to make judgments about how effective a design is or how it might be changed to be more effective.

Collect all six

This article is the first of Diane Fitzgerald's six-part series on designing beadwork, a *Bead&Button* exclusive. Collect and save each installment of the series for the ultimate design resource!

Diane Fitzgerald is an internationally recognized teacher, designer, and author. She received the 2008 Excellence in Bead Artistry award at the Bead&Button Show and taught one of the show's Master Classes in 2007. Diane has written nine beading books. Her next book, Shaped Beadwork, will be published in March 2009. Diane teaches classes at many locations, which are listed on her Web site, dianefitzgerald.com. You can read more about Diane at BeadAndButton.com/15.



The elements of design

The elements of design are visual components that can be manipulated and modified in creating an object or composition.

1 Points and lines: Points and lines are linear marks made with a pen, brush, or other device or the edge created when two shapes meet. In beading, strung necklaces may be thought of as a series of points and lines.

Closely related to line is the concept of direction, which may be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal. Horizontal lines suggest calmness, stability, and tranquility. Vertical lines give a feeling of balance, formality, and alertness. Diagonal lines suggest movement or action.

2 Shape and space: Shape is defined as areas of three-dimensional geometric or organic form. Shape may also be referred to as volume, mass, or area. One way that shape is important in beading is the way a necklace's shape interacts with one's face and upper body.

Space is the area surrounding forms, shapes, lines, and points.

3 Light and transparency: Light is radiant energy from the sun or other source that allows us to see and creates highlights and shadows. Transparency is the ability of light to pass

through an object so that images can be perceived as being behind it. In beading, metal, glass, stone, and other materials may be reflective or transparent.

4 Motion: Motion is actual movement, but it may also be expressed through repetition, gradation, or other visual effects. In beading, motion is exhibited in dangles, which attract the eye, and in the movement of our eye as it follows a path through a piece.

5 Color and value: Color is a general term used to describe the perception of light as our eye sees it. Color or hue refers to characteristics that we call red, blue, orange, brown, black, white, and other names. Color has value, considered in terms of lightness or darkness. Value is sometimes referred to as tone.

6 Pattern and texture: Patterns are visual elements of design, which are repeated, while texture is the surface quality communicated by touch, although it may be perceived visually as well. In beadwork, tiny seed beads create a pebbly texture while glass, stone, or metal beads create a smooth surface.

Try it yourself

Identify which of the four principles of design is at work in each of these pieces. For answers, visit BeadAndButton.com/resources.



1. Crystal geometry necklace



2. Braided garland necklace



3. Celtic trefoil necklace



4. Wild flowers necklace

The principles of design

The principles of design serve as guidelines to help us see relationships among the elements of a design. They are not hard-and-fast rules. Think of them as suggestions to use in evaluating a design.

1 Proportion: Proportion refers to the relative size and scale of objects in a design. It may carry implications about the message or goal of the piece.

2 Balance: Balance is the concept of visual weight and how it is distributed. It relates to our physical sense of balance. Balance may be symmetrical or asymmetrical.

3 Rhythm, repetition, and emphasis: Rhythm is the path our eye follows as it moves through repeated elements to reach the final destination, which is the emphasis. Emphasis is the

focal point, the most important element in the design.

4 Variety and unity: Variety is a means of adding interest to a piece, while unity is the principle that connects the variety. Both variety and unity should be present in good designs.

All of the above elements and principles may be applied to our beaded designs. Study them in preparation for part 2 of this series, coming in the April issue, in which we will discuss points, lines, and shapes.

For a great online tutorial of design by one of my college professors, Char Jirousek, go to <http://char.txa.cornell.edu/>. The time you spend at this site will be well worth it.

DESIGNING BEADWORK: PART 2

Points, lines & shapes

by Diane Fitzgerald

For more information about designing beadwork, go to the Community tab at BeadAndButton.com. To learn more about Diane, visit BeadAndButton.com/15.

In part 1 of this series, we covered the language of design — including the elements and principles of design — as it applies to bead stringing and stitching. In part 2, we'll discuss three of the elements in greater depth.

In the first installment of this series, we briefly talked about points, lines, and shapes. A point is a single entity, a line is an entity that extends linearly, and a shape is a two- or three-dimensional form.

These elements of design are important visual components that appear in every bead composition. A single bead may be considered a point, and when several are strung, they create lines.

Lines may define the boundaries of an object or divide a space, and thus they create a shape. Also, each bead has a distinctive shape, and two or more beads strung or stitched together create a new shape.

Part 2 of 6

This is the second installment of Diane's six-part series. To read part 1 from the February 2009 issue, go to BeadAndButton.com and click on the Magazines tab, then Back Issues. Look for part 3 in the June 2009 issue.

The power of points and lines

Points and lines can suggest many new ideas for our bead projects. Lines — or beads that are strung, embroidered, or stitched together — communicate ideas in myriad ways.

For example, consider directional lines. Horizontal lines are less formal and suggest calm, repose, and stability. Vertical lines suggest majesty, stateliness, and height.

Diagonal lines are active and dynamic, suggesting movement. Being neither vertical nor horizontal, the lines create tension because we are uncertain which way the lines will tilt or move.

Curvilinear lines, spiral lines, and meandering lines may suggest playfulness, the naturalness of vines or tendrils, or a path through a forest. Curvilinear lines are also related to calligraphy and can impart ideas through culturally understood written language.

In contrast, zigzag lines convey excitement like a bolt of lightning. All of these lines create rhythm if repeated regularly.

Lines may be broken or comprised of a series of points (or beads), but our minds will complete the line even though parts are missing. For example,

a dotted or dashed line is usually thought of as a continuous line even though it has gaps.

Lines can also direct our attention. Intersecting lines bring our eye to the point where they cross and may lead us to the focal point of a piece.

What's in a shape?

Shapes are similar to lines in the way they convey information. We associate certain shapes with familiar objects: A drop shape may suggest the movement of liquid, a pointed oval may suggest an eye, and a triangle may suggest a tree.

Also consider how the overall line or shape of a necklace relates to the wearer's face, neck, and upper torso. A short necklace worn near the collarbone may be more flattering to someone with a small, oval face because it tricks the eye into thinking that the face is larger and wider.

A longer necklace, such as one that lays just above the bust line, may be more flattering to someone with a round or squarish face because the necklace will lengthen the face in a pleasing way.

Similarly, a necklace that comes to a sharp V, such as one with a pendant, will tend to soften the lines of a torso with broad shoulders because it will guide our eye away from the shoulders toward the point of the V. Necklaces that reach almost to the waist may have a slimming effect or make one appear taller.

Practice



Photos by Diane Fitzgerald



Photos by Petronella Ytsma



1. Repeating lines form this simple but elegant collar by Sonya Monzel. A series of polychrome crocheted ropes are seen as a unified overall shape that is flattering to the wearer without being overpowering.

2. Simple shapes convey meaning. My inspiration for this piece was an ancient Egyptian necklace featuring three Golden Fly of Valour pendants found in the grave of Queen Ahhotep. My gold stitched Vs evoke wings, and the black oval beads recall the body of a fly.

3. In a necklace by Shawn Judge, we see examples of directional lines that may suggest the prickly spines of a sea urchin. Note how the artist uses a curving line in a lighter color to suggest another type of movement, but one that does not detract from the radiating movement of the black and white spines.

4. In another piece by Shawn Judge, elongated beads create sharp, angular lines punctuated by small beads at the vertices. The elongated beads also create new shapes, such as the triangle, while the black and white disk beads are strung to form a curving line. Circular lines or shapes are also present in the three black rings and the black donut. The combination of angles and circles creates a striking contrast of shape.

5. In this Blackfoot dress, ca. 1860, high-contrast black and white lines of beadwork flow across the yoke and down the sleeves to create a bold horizontal design and a curvilinear shape. Vertical lines extend across the yoke and down the sleeves but are secondary, connecting other elements without competing with the black and white stripes. The beaded fringe below the stripes continues these vertical lines and adds movement.

6. The elk teeth on this Crow dress, ca. 1900, function as points and form repeating concentric lines in a semi-circular pattern accented with lines of seed beads and a yoke of red wool in a V shape. Narrow strips of leather add vertical lines and create movement.

You might need to train yourself to see relationships between points, lines, and shapes. Here are three exercises to get you thinking about these elements and how they interact in different visual settings.

Exercise 1: In a small notebook that you carry with you, begin to jot down words that express different kinds of lines as you think of them or notice them. Draw a picture of the line next to the word. Later, add words to express the idea that the line communicates.

Exercise 2: Assemble an assortment of beads of different shapes but in only two colors, such as black and gold. Look for round beads in several sizes, bicones, cubes, drops, barrels, ovals, dog bones, diamond shapes, disks, nuggets, rice shapes, tubes, rondelles, bugles, and other shapes.

On a 3-in. (7.6 cm) head pin or piece of wire, string three or more beads, and consider the new shape that is made when they are combined. Photograph, scan, or photocopy each combination for future reference. Repeat the process.

Exercise 3: Wearing a plain, round-neck shirt, put on a necklace and look at it in a mirror. You can also ask a friend to wear it or put it on a body form. Describe the line that is formed by the overall necklace. Is the line created at its boundary round, oval, pointed or another shape? Compare this shape to the shape of the wearer's face. Now try on another necklace and see which is most flattering. ●

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DESIGNING BEADWORK: PART 3

Light transparency & motion

by **Diane Fitzgerald**

In part 3 of this series, I will discuss three elements of design that are very important yet easy to overlook as we assemble our jewelry.

Shedding light on light

We know that light can affect our moods. In sunlight, we are likely to feel happy and energetic, while a cloudy day may bring on lethargy. Light can affect our beads as well, but in different ways.

Light reflects off of objects and into our eyes, allowing us to see. The sparkle or flash of faceted-glass beads is just one example of the mystery and magic of light that makes these beads so appealing.

The color of light will change the appearance of our beadwork. Full sunlight has a wide spectrum of color and will give a true color reflection. Some fluorescent light may shift colors toward blue tones. Moonlight tends

to wash out color and makes everything appear in shades of white or gray, suggesting an eerie quality.

In general, it is a good idea to select beads in daylight, but interesting effects may result from selecting beads in the light in which they will be viewed. For example, if beads will be worn during an intimate candlelit dinner, use low light to select the colors.

Light also creates highlights and shadows on surfaces with depressions and contours such as we find in beadwork. If we are creating a flat surface of beadwork, we may want to create the appearance of highlights or shadows with the bead colors we choose, creating the illusion of dimensionality.

Bead surfaces reflect light differently, depending on their molecular structure. Pearls have a subtle sheen, while some shells reflect a rainbow of colors. The gemstone tigereye exhibits silky bands of luminescence called chatoyancy.

Beads with an iridescent finish appear in a range of colors from blue and green to gold and magenta, similar to an oil slick on water. CRYSTAL-LIZED™ - *Swarovski* beads come in a wide range of light-reflecting finishes with names to suggest their effects: starlight, purple haze, Aurora Borealis (AB), satin, and golden shadow.

Transparent intentions

Transparency is the ability of light to pass through an object so that images are perceived as being behind it or below its surface. This element of design is most apparent with glass and plastic beads.

For example, many glass-bead makers today create intriguing compositions that are encased in clear glass, giving the effect of seeing the inside of the bead through a window or under water.

We can also see the effects of transparency in our use of stringing material. Thread or cord color that shows through beads will change the perceived color of the glass (even opaque glass) and provides an additional design element to consider.

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Two types of motion

Motion is movement or the process of relocating an object over time. Motion catches our attention and engages our thinking as we consider the direction of movement and how it relates to surrounding objects.

We can consider two types of motion in our beadwork. The first is actual movement, which results when a string of beads is tethered at only one end, as with fringe, a pendant, or an earring.

The other type of motion we find in beadwork is suggested movement, such as the path that our eye follows along a string of beads, as it moves from element to element, or the more subtle motion of growth, as in a necklace resembling vines with leaves and flowers.

Suggested movement may be expressed through repetition, gradation, or other visual effects. Repeating shapes may suggest the flutter of wings, and gradation

may suggest advancing or receding movement. Sometimes movement is suggested by positioning an element diagonally so that it appears ready to fall or sway.

Part 3 of 6

Diane is halfway through her year-long design series. Look for her fourth installment in the August 2009 issue of *Bead&Button*.

Putting it all together

So how are light, transparency, and motion related? As our beads move, light bounces off the surface and catches our eye. Transparency depends on a surface that light can penetrate. And when we change the angle from which we view a piece, new design features are revealed.

Here are some exercises to help you practice observing the interaction of light, transparency, and motion.

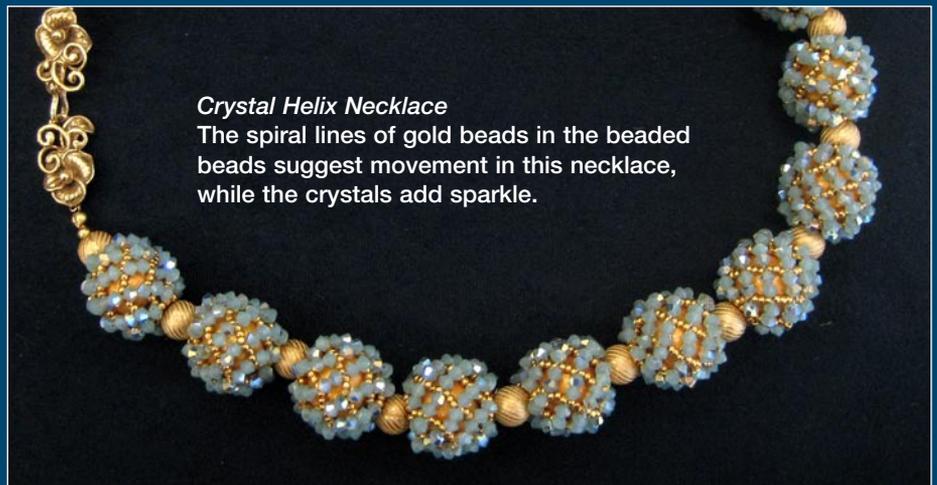
1 Study the stitched pieces in the book *Masters: Beadweaving*, by Carol Wilcox Wells, and strung jewelry in *Beadazzled*, by Penelope Diamanti, to identify examples of light, transparency, and motion.

2 Make small samples of peyote stitch with seed beads, carry them with you in your purse, then look at them in different lights. How does the appearance of the samples change in each light?

3 Make a list of 10 words that describes each of the elements light, transparency, and motion. Word association will help you identify these concepts more readily and include them in your own beadwork. ●

www.beadandbutton.com Did you miss part 2 of Diane's six-part series? You can order the April issue at BeadAndButton.com. Click the Magazines tab, then Back Issues.

Design elements in action



Crystal Helix Necklace

The spiral lines of gold beads in the beaded beads suggest movement in this necklace, while the crystals add sparkle.

Photos by Diane Fitzgerald



Crystal Bonbons

These beaded delicacies catch the light and sparkle as the viewer moves around them.



Underwater Bead

One almost expects a mermaid to peek out from behind one of the shells below the transparent surface of this bead.



Tie-One-On Necklace

Each dangle of shells and seed beads creates movement. The flash of colors in the shells is an example of chatoyancy, a luminescent form of light.

DESIGNING BEADWORK: PART 4

Pattern & texture

by **Diane Fitzgerald**

The pattern and texture of our beads and beadwork say a lot about the jewelry we make. In part 4 of this series, I'll teach you how to harness the power of these two elements of design.

All surfaces, including the surfaces of beads, are covered with patterns or textures. Patterns are organized surface coverings that generally repeat regularly, while textures are more random, irregular, and less organized.

One way to think about patterns is to categorize them. Some patterns form grids, such as a checkerboard or other

repeats of a geometric shape, like the hexagonal cells of a honeycomb. Each of the cells within a grid may contain other patterns or motifs (for instance, a repeated line, shape, or color) to create a finer structure.

Other patterns may be thought of as branching, as with plant forms; spirals, like the ones found in shells

or flowers; and flowing patterns that convey movement, such as meandering or undulating lines.

Of all the design elements, texture is perhaps associated the most with our sense of touch. Because of the appeal of this tactile element, we often see people touch beads with their forefinger, connecting with and taking in information from the texture.

Pattern and texture are important design elements to consider when working with beads. Let's look at strung jewelry first.

Stringing patterns, considering textures

The simplest form of pattern in stringing is alternating beads: a large bead then a small bead, or a shiny bead then a matte bead. To bring interest to our pieces, we often combine several different shapes of beads and repeat them to make complex patterns. Even when we limit ourselves to just two colors and a few shapes, we can create a wide variety of patterns.

When combining different patterns, trust your judgment about what works well. Use your digital camera or a scanner or make a sketch of each arrangement of beads as you create it so that

you can go back and compare the results. Of course, color will influence the pattern, and we'll discuss that in a future article.

In stringing, we should also consider the variety of materials that beads are made from: crystal, glass, wood, shell, polymer clay, metal, bone, and many other materials, each with the possibility of many types of surface textures. As a result, beads may be shiny, matte, or patterned in any of the ways mentioned above. The surface pattern or texture may even be directional, such as a wood grain or swirling pattern.

Part 4 of 6

So far in this series, Diane has covered five of the six elements of design. Next up in the October issue — color.

 In part 1 of this series, published in our February 2009 issue, Diane gave an overview of the elements and principles of design. You can read it online at BeadAndButton.com/jewelrydesign. To read parts 2 and 3, order our April and June issues. Go to BeadAndButton.com and click Magazines, then Back Issues.

"In working with seed beads, a critical consideration is contrast of texture."

Stitching contrasting patterns and textures

Now, let's turn our attention to stitched beadwork, made with seed beads, cylinders, triangles, cubes, and other small beads.

When seed beads are combined in peyote stitch, brick stitch, or right-angle weave, a specific pattern or texture results depending on how the beads are oriented. As light plays across these tiny beads, we see the highlights and shadows that are created by their shapes.

These patterns and textures may be overpowering, and we need to provide relief for the eye with a contrasting smooth texture. In a recent review of entries in a bead contest, lack of contrasting textures was the biggest problem. Beautiful glass beads were often lost in the texture of the beadwork, and many pieces ended up looking jumbled. In working with seed beads, a critical consideration is contrast of texture.

We also need to consider the direction or flow of pattern and texture that results when we stitch. In peyote and brick stitches, the beads lie in a single direction, but with right-angle weave, beads lie perpendicular to each other. In herringbone stitch, alternating beads are slightly angled. With bead embroidery, the textural flow of beads can be in any direction that emphasizes the design. Familiarity with each stitch is important so we can select a stitch that will achieve the desired effect.

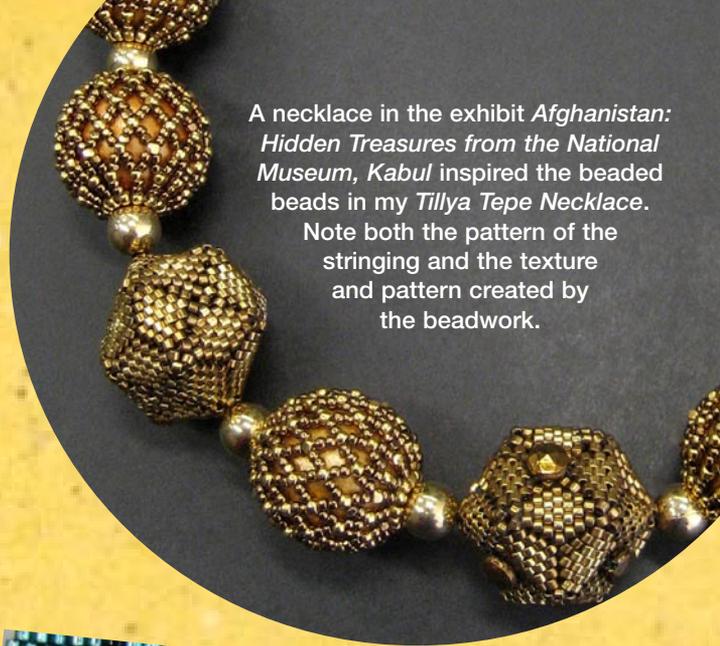
For example, when stitching a triangle with peyote stitch, the direction of the stitch emphasizes the overall shape. If we stitched a triangle with right-angle weave, the texture of the weave (square) would detract from the overall shape of the triangle.

Another example might be trying to create the texture of snakeskin for a tube. In that case, herringbone might suggest a snake's scales and help convey the message or intent of the piece more clearly.

And speaking of messages in the beads, the surface finishes of seed beads say something about a piece. When you select beads for a project, you might choose from silver-lined, metallic, AB, opalescent, opaque, and matte beads. Generally, the first four finishes are considered more "elegant," while the last two are more casual or ethnic.

Thus, whether we are stringing or stitching, we want to select beads and stitches with patterns and textures that enhance the intent of the piece rather than detract from it. ●

Diane Fitzgerald is an internationally recognized teacher, designer, and author. She received the 2008 Excellence in Bead Artistry Award at the Bead&Button Show and taught one of its Master Classes in 2007. Diane has written 10 beading books. Her latest book, Shaped Beadwork, came out in March 2009. Diane teaches classes at many locations, which are listed on her Web site, dianefitzgerald.com. You can read more about Diane at BeadAndButton.com/15.



A necklace in the exhibit *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul* inspired the beaded beads in my *Tillya Tepe Necklace*.

Note both the pattern of the stringing and the texture and pattern created by the beadwork.

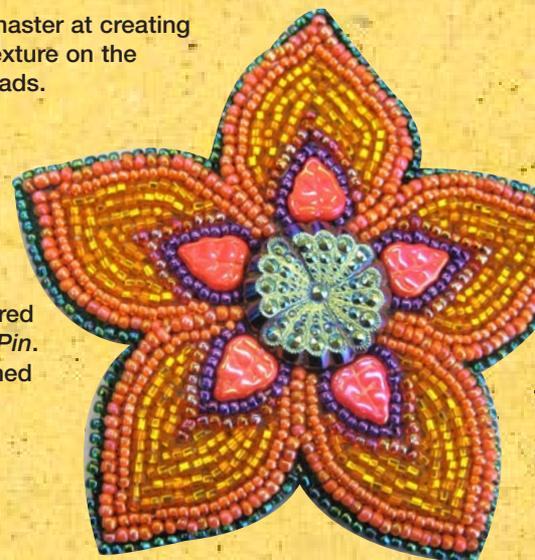


Although the cylinder beads in this strip are very close in color, their finish makes each unique: DB607 (silver lined), 427 (galvanized), 1782 (white lined), 217 (opaque), 786 (matte), 166 (opaque), and 627 (silver lined).



James Jones is a master at creating both pattern and texture on the surface of glass beads.

The direction or flow of texture is a consideration in my bead-embroidered *Orange Pimpernel Pin*. Here the backstitched beads emphasize the outline of the flower petals.



DESIGNING BEADWORK:
PART 5

Choosing color

by Diane Fitzgerald

If selecting colors for your beadwork doesn't come naturally to you, take heart. Choosing color is a skill that can be learned through study and practice.

The world of color is fascinating and complex. We could delve into the physics, history, symbolism, or psychology of color, but what is often most important to beaders is knowing how to choose colors.

Rather than talking about the color wheel, complementary and monochrome palettes, and other color basics you've probably already heard about, I'd like to offer some guidance and a few of my tried-and-true suggestions.

Color 101

You can take two approaches to color. First, you can learn about color theory. I once painted my living room three times in various shades of deep blue before I got what I wanted. After taking formal color classes, where I mixed paint for hours on end, I learned how basic colors (red, yellow, blue, black, and white) are combined to create an endless variety of new colors.

If you wish to follow this approach, take a color class at a local college or

art museum, or study the book *Color Works: The Crafter's Guide to Color* by Deb Menz. This understandable book not only describes the language of color and the many harmonies and contrasts that are possible, it also shows examples of these palettes in several mediums, such as beading, knitting, and embroidery. I highly recommend this book for both the color novice and expert.

Color recipes

The second approach to color is more immediate: It involves using recipes for colors that work well together. Books such as *The Beader's Color Palette* by Margie Deeb give examples of bead designs and describe the color palette as well as the proportion of each color used in the palette.

To translate colors from works of art into your projects, *Beadwork Inspired by Impressionist Paintings* by Jean Campbell and Judith Durant suggests

many ideas. Begin by identifying the dominant color(s) in a painting and the secondary colors used in smaller proportions. Note whether the colors used are clear hues, muted tones, brights, pastels, or other palettes.

For a historical approach to color, *Living Color: The Definitive Guide to Color Palettes through the Ages* by Margaret Walch and Augustine Hope provides 80 color palettes derived from interior design, clothing, paintings, pottery, and even ancient Egyptian tomb paintings. For each example, the colors are shown separately with color swatches, making it easy to develop a color palette with beads.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

To learn more about choosing colors for your beadwork, check out *Bead&Button's* special issue *Brilliant Crystal Jewelry 2* for an article on basic color vocabulary and another on telling stories with beaded jewelry. Available from BeadAndButton.com.

– Stacy

Diane's top 10 tips

Now let me share some of the tips I find most valuable when working with color.

- 1 Select a color that you love and is appropriate for your project.
Working with a color that attracts you will help keep you motivated to continue the project. For your second color, select a contrasting color, such as the color opposite on the color wheel, or a lighter or darker version of your first color. To add a third color, find a middle mixture of your first choice and its contrast. Middle mixtures are combinations of colors that are opposite on the color wheel. These rich, subtle colors are often referred to as neutrals.
- 2 When working with middle mixtures, be conscious of the phenomenon of simultaneous contrast. This occurs when a middle mixture looks different depending on the surrounding color.
- 3 Don't worry about matching colors exactly. Once, after I finished beading around a rivoli, I found I didn't have enough beads to create a chain for the pendant. I searched through my stash of 4 mm bicones and found several colors that were similar and mixed them together. The result was a rich blending of high-lights and shadows.
- 4 Before beginning any seed bead project, try stitching the beads in a quick peyote sample. For a stringing project, try various arrangements, and take a digital photo of each for comparison.
- 5 Because beads have such a variety of finishes, our color choices become even more complex. Once you have two or three colors in mind,

try varying the surface texture of one of the colors. For example, if you're using mostly shiny beads, try adding one with a matte or semi-matte finish. If you're stringing, consider pairing the soft sheen of pearls with shiny beads.

6 If you want to show geometric designs in your beading, select beads in opaque colors. If you are working with natural motifs, such as flowers or sunsets, select colors that are close in hue and value so that the blending of colors in nature can be portrayed.

7 Practice imagining how colors will look together in the project you are planning. Shut your eyes and visualize the colors. Of course, things don't always turn out as we imagine they will, but, with practice, learning to visualize can save a lot of time.

8 If you find that you're stuck in a rut with your favorite color palette, don't worry. Continue with it, but add one new color to add interest and expand your horizons.

9 When you're completely stymied about colors, add a dash of lime green to the colors you've chosen and see what happens. Another option is to add a metal bead or metallic color, a suggestion offered by my first beading instructor, Helen Banes, who said, "A little metal suggests jewelry."

10 Clip images from magazines, photocopy them from books, or take digital photos and begin a scrapbook of color palettes. Jot down notes about each image to recall what you do or don't like about the palette, how it might be changed by adding or omitting a color, and what the colors might suggest to you or others. ●



Richly saturated neutrals give lasting satisfaction as in these beads by Harold Williams Cooney.



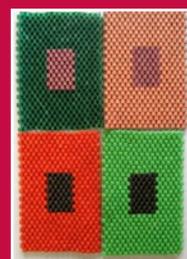
Can't decide on a color? Choose a few versions of the color in lighter and darker shades and blend them. Note how the gold-plated seed beads give the necklace the look of precious metal.



The hardest color for me to use is gray, but it is the only color that worked with these dagger beads. The soft luster of pearls also contrasts with shiny beads.



In my Zulu Flowerette Bracelet, pastel colors are enhanced by deeper-toned beads.



Dark brown appears lighter surrounded by red and darker when surrounded by green; the rose color is intensified by deep green and lightened by a color close in value and hue.

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Pulling it **all** together

by Diane Fitzgerald

Over the last year, I've talked about the elements of design. In this final installment, I'll show you how to combine them to create strikingly original jewelry.

In my past five articles on designing beadwork, I've reviewed the elements of design: points, lines, and shapes; light, transparency, and motion; pattern and texture; and color. Now let's consider how to bring these elements together and evaluate the effectiveness of a piece using the principles of design.

Keep in mind that the principles are guidelines, not hard-and-fast rules. They are objective, relating to the design of a piece, and have nothing to do with whether you personally like the piece.

For each principle, I pose a few questions to help you evaluate a design or find a solution to beadwork that just doesn't look right. Try it for yourself!

Symmetrical and asymmetrical balance

Balance is the idea of achieving equilibrium among various elements in a piece. When designing with beads, balance the visual interest and weight of the colors, shapes, and sizes in your piece. The simplest way to achieve balance is through symmetry — a mirror image along a vertical axis (from side to side).

While symmetry, or formal balance, is the most frequently used type of balance and is satisfying to the viewer, your work will be more engaging if it is asymmetrical, that is, if a piece has visual balance but is not identical from side to side.

An asymmetrical piece calls attention to a special element that is placed off center. Secondary elements are placed to complement the focal element so that the overall look is balanced from side to side. Asymmetry is also referred to as informal balance.

? Ask yourself: *Is the piece balanced? Is the balance symmetrical or asymmetrical? If it is asymmetrical, is the visual weight equal from side to side?*

Grouping that grabs

Grouping is the positioning of selected beads or elements together to create a new shape, pattern, texture, or color palette. Grouping appeals to one of our basic human drives: to establish order in the world.

As designers, we want to control what the viewer sees and the message

Principles at play



Balance and proportion: The flowers in my *Poppy necklace* are centered symmetrically while the leaves are placed less formally, framing the poppies and adding interest.



Variety and unity: The varied shapes in Sandra Houk's *Exotic shapes necklace* are unified by the overall colors and crystal accents.



Grouping, variety, and unity: I grouped the flowers in *Tussy mussy bouquet* using a silver holder, which pulls them together. The bouquet contains a variety of flowers, which are unified by their bright colors. The flower instructions are available in my book *The Beaded Garden*.

the design imparts, such as a message of order, beauty, or excitement. As viewers of a beaded object, we try to make sense of the message. If we quickly see and understand a grouping of beads — for instance, if they have a similar color, shape, or texture or communicate an obvious theme — we are quickly satisfied. But if we have to study the grouping for a bit to make sense of it, we become more engaged and thus more satisfied when we “figure it out.”

? *Ask yourself: Are elements in a piece grouped to add interest or convey a message? What new shapes or patterns are created by the grouping?*

Carried along by rhythm

We achieve rhythm by repeating or grouping shapes, colors, textures, and patterns at spatial intervals. Rhythm helps our eyes move around a piece, providing stepping stones from one part to another. It also helps bring our eyes to the focal point and to move away from it again.

Radial rhythm occurs in elements that emerge from a central point, such as a flower or star, while gradation is a form of rhythm that helps the viewer see movement from foreground to background. Gradation may involve arranging colors from dull to intense, from light to dark, or from hue to hue.



Rhythm and emphasis: The rhythm of the white-capped waves in *Land of the rising sun necklace* aids the eye in moving through the piece. There is no doubt about the emphasis: The orange sun bead is the focal point. The sun bead is by Jeff Barber.

? *Ask yourself: How do my eyes travel through the piece from element to element? Is the piece engaging and pleasing in parts and as a whole?*

Emphasis = Importance

Emphasis is the quality of dominance or being most obvious. We want to accent a particular element in our jewelry to give the viewer a sense of what the piece is about and what is important in it. Emphasis can be achieved through placement in both formal and informal balance, and through contrast of color, texture, or size of the elements.

? *Ask yourself: What is the most important part of this piece? Does its placement reinforce its dominance?*

Size matters

Proportion involves comparisons of the size of elements to each other and to the piece as a whole. In jewelry, we might compare the size of the beads and elements to the overall length of the necklace, and the size of the necklace to the wearer's body.

For example, a short, single-strand necklace of tiny seed beads might seem out of proportion if worn by a larger person, or a long necklace of big, chunky beads might seem to overpower a petite person.

Likewise, a few seed beads may be too weak to support a large bead, which will confuse the message for the viewer. My sister recently found some small snowflake beads. Her first impulse was to use larger round beads to set them off, but she quickly realized that the larger beads overwhelmed her snowflakes. This is also an example of how proportion affects emphasis.

? *Ask yourself: How do the proportions of the elements relate to each other and to the whole?*

Achieving unified variety

Unity is the compatibility of elements in a design or their relationship to each other and to the whole. We say a piece is unified if the parts work together in a harmonious way. This means that the parts have something in common, whether it is color, line, form, or texture.

But unity alone can become monotonous, so this principle should not be carried to the extreme. Within unity, variety can add excitement and keep the viewer visually alert.

For example, elements in a necklace may be related by their bold geometric shapes, but their primary colors add variety. Another example is a charm bracelet. The charms may be varied in what they represent but related in their overall theme, such as mementos of travel, grandchildren, or life events.

? *Ask yourself: How is the piece unified? Is there variety within the unity?*

Go forth and bead!

As you can see by the examples to the right, combining multiple principles of design in a single piece adds interest to your work, pleases the eye, and satisfies the viewer. With these principles in mind, you'll feel more confident during the creative process. You'll also be able to get past design dilemmas by evaluating how the principles are (or are not) working in your piece.

So get beading! With your knowledge of the elements and principles of design, plus a little patience and practice, you'll have all the tools you need to design beautiful beadwork. ●

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